

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T KUWAIT 5371

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS KU IR PFOR UR
SUBJECT: KUWAITI ARMS PURCHASES FROM RUSSIA

REF: A) TEHRAN 12343; B) KUWAIT 5286; C) KUWAIT 5244

1. AT FAREWELL CALL DCM AND I PAID ON CROWN PRINCE/PM JABIR AL-AHMAD DEC 23 I ASKED HIM WHAT HE WANTED ME TO SAY ABOUT KUWAITI ARMS DISCUSSIONS WITH SOVIETS IN CASE ANYONE IN USG ASKED. SHAIKH JABIR REPLIED GOK VIEWS RUSSIAN ARMS FOR KUWAIT AS PRIMARILY A POLITICAL SUBJECT. IN CONFORMANCE WITH ITS STANDING NATIONAL POLICY OF MAINTAINING TIES WITH ALL SIDES, GOK HAS CONCLUDED IT NECESSARY TO DEVELOP ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH USSR SOMEWHAT FURTHER IN ALL FIELDS, INCLUDING MILITARY. QUITE FRANKLY, HE SAID, WEAPONS FROM RUSSIA ARE ESSENTIALLY WINDOW DRESSING OPERATION. NO HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED ARMS ARE INVOLVED AND NO CONTRACT YET SIGNED. ("RUSSIANS WON'T SELL EGYPTIANS AND US THEIR MOST MODERN WEAPONS ANYWAY.") WEAPONS WILL BE THOSE EGYPTIANS ALREADY HAVE AND THUS GOK WILL BE ABLE TO HIRE EGYPTIAN TECHNICIANS TO ASSIST RATHER THAN SOVIET MILITARY PERSONNEL. KUWAIT KNOWS FULL WELL WHOM IT CAN REALLY DEPEND UPON, AND IN THIS CONNECTION HE HOPED US MILITARY PROGRAMS IN KUWAIT COULD BE EXPEDITED SINCE THEY WOULD BE THE GUTS OF ANY TRULY EFFECTIVE KUWAITI DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY.

2. AS WE HAVE OFTEN SAID TO KUWAITIS BEFORE, I OBSERVED TO SHAIKH
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JABIR THAT IT NOT OUR BUSINESS TO TELL KUWAITIS WHERE TO BUY ARMS,

BUT THEY SHOULD REALIZE THAT POTPOURRI OF WEAPONS AND ADVISERS WAS SIMPLY NOT GOING TO ADD UP TO EFFECTIVE DEFENSIVE FORCE. RE SPEEDING UP US MILITARY PROGRAMS, I SAID CP/PM COULD HELP A LOT BY SEEING TO IT THAT NECESSARY US-KUWAITI SECURITY AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED BY MINISTRY OF DEFENSE SOONEST. SHAIKH JABIR REPLIED GOK HAD NO INTENTION OF ALLOWING ANY SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF SOVIET ADVISERS INTO COUNTRY; AND HE WOULD LOOK INTO PRESENT STATUS OF SECURITY AGREEMENT.

3. COMMENT: REGARDING SHAH'S REMARKS REPORTED REF A, IT MIGHT BE WORTH POINTING OUT TO HIM SOMETIME THAT OUR MILITARY EXPERTS DO NOT TAKE KUWAITI DEFENSE POTENTIALITIES AS LIGHTLY AS HE APPARENTLY DOES. WE BELIEVE KUWAITIS CAN ACQUIRE DEFENSIVE FORCE TO WITHSTAND IRAQIS AT LEAST LONG ENOUGH TO GET ON THE PHONE TO UN, ARAB LEAGUE AND ANYONE ELSE THAT MIGHT BE WILLING TO HELP PERSUADE IRAQIS TO LAY OFF. WE DO NOT AT ALL RULE OUT POSSIBILITY THAT KUWAITIS WOULD CALL FOR HELP FROM IRAN IN EXTREMIS. AT THE SAME TIME I FIND IT DIFFICULT BELIEVE AS SHREWD OBSERVER AS SHAH IS UNABLE UNDERSTAND KUWAITIS' RELUCTANCE TO EXPOSE THEMSELVES TO CRITICISM BY FELLOW ARABS BY ENTERING INTO FORMAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENT WITH IRAN, PARTICULARLY AS LONG AS IRAQIS ARE OPPOSED TO THIS IDEA. IN FACE IRAQI ATTITUDE, KUWAITIS SEE OPEN PERSIAN EMBRACE AS JUST AS LIKELY TO INCREASE AS TO LESSEN THE DANGER FROM IRAQ. KUWAITIS ARE PROBABLY ON SOUNDER GROUND WITH THESE VIEWS THAN THEY ARE WITH ANOTHER OF THEIR THEORIES: THAT IN BEING WILLING PROVIDE GOK WITH SOME WEAPONS, SOVIETS WILL SOMEHOW FIND IT MORE DIFFICULT TO SIDE WITH IRAQ IN ANY FUTURE IRAQI-KUWAITI DISPUTE. STOLTZFUS

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